



News Release

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CORPS' BIG ISLAND FLOOD CONTROL PROJECTS PREVENT MORE THAN \$20 MILLION IN DAMAGE

Three Army Corps of Engineers flood control projects on the Big Island of Hawaii were put to the test by record-breaking rains in early November and prevented damages to nearby communities estimated at more than \$20 million. Corps officials said that all three projects performed as designed. More than 30 inches of rain fell on Hilo and up to nearly 37 inches near the town of Pahala during the two-day period of Nov. 1 and 2, 2000.

Preliminary estimates by the Corps based on high-water marks in the project site areas and other data indicate that the Alenaio Flood Control Project (FCP), which cost nearly \$16 million when it was completed in 1998, prevented losses estimated at nearly \$20 million, and literally paid for itself during this recent event. However, the Alenaio project did not emerge completely unscathed, sustaining damage to a stream bank. Water overtopped the project at this location, but the overflow was contained by an adjacent channel and rapidly returned to the project.

Ten floods struck downtown Hilo from 1920 through 1994 when the decision was made to go ahead with the Alenaio FCP. This was the first real test of the project since 15 inches of rain fell on Hilo during a two day period in August 1994 just before construction started.

According to similar preliminary estimates, Wailoa Stream FCP prevented damages of nearly \$1.5 million, although a 150-foot stretch of levee was overtopped when the natural stream path changed at the upstream end of the project. Rocks and debris ended up on the nearby UH-Hilo baseball field. Some 300 feet of rip-rap and 200 feet of concrete also washed away and will have to be replaced.

Paaau Stream FCP near Pahala prevented estimated losses that could have exceeded \$1.5 million, although it too sustained damage to a levee. An area 180 feet long and ten feet high was undercut by rushing waters.

Repairs to all three projects are estimated at \$1 million. Conclusive figures for Hawaii-island-wide damages are not yet available.